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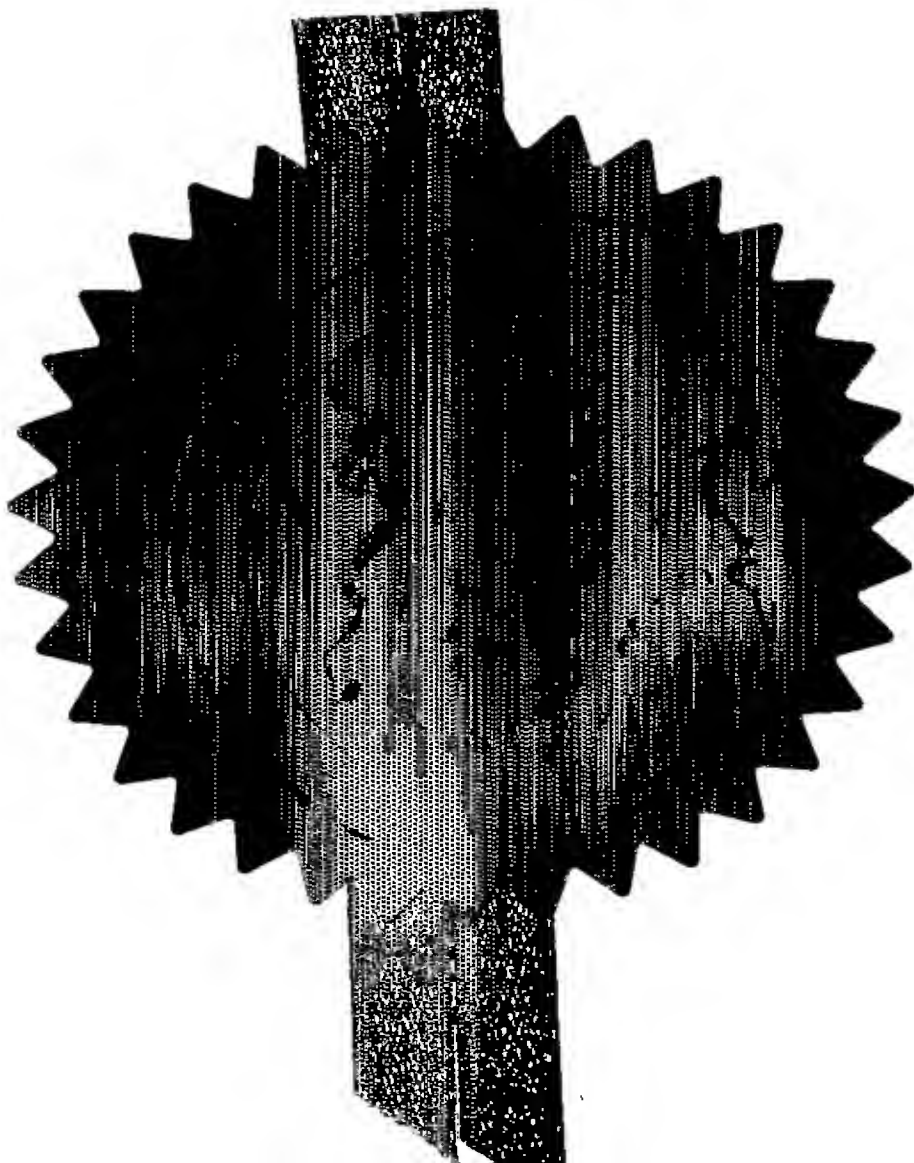
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Dated 24 December 2004



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1/77
24 DEC 2003

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Request for grant of a patent

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1. Your Reference

BA/SLH/Y2468

2. Application number

24 DEC 2003

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3. Full name, address and postcode
of the or each Applicant

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4. Title of the invention

IMPROVEMENTS IN AND RELATING TO
VEHICLE ACCESSORIES

5. Name of agent

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Address for service in the UK to
which all correspondence should
be sent

15 CLARE ROAD

HALIFAX

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Patents ADP number

190001

6. Priority claimed to:

Country

Application number

Date of filing

7. Divisional status claimed from:

Number of parent application

Date of filing

8. Is a statement of inventorship and
of right to grant a patent required in
support of this application?

NO

Patents Form 1/77

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9. Enter the number of sheets for any of the following items you are filing with this form. Do not count copies of the same document

Continuation sheets of this form

Description

9 (x2)

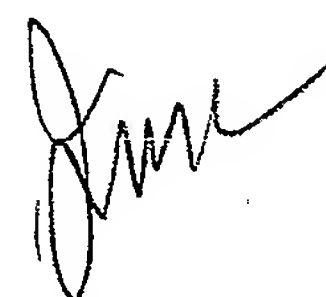
Claim(s)

Abstract

Drawing(s)

3 (x2)

only



10. If you are also filing any of the following, state how many against each item

Priority documents

Translation of priority documents

Statement of inventorship and right to grant a patent (PF 7/77)

Request for a preliminary examination and search (PF 9/77)

Request for substantive examination (PF 10/77)

Any other documents (please specify)

11.

We request the grant of a patent on the basis of this application.
Signature Date

APPLEYARD LEES

24 December 2003



12. Contact

Ben Appleton - 0161 835 9655

Improvements In and Relating to Vehicle Accessories

Field of the Invention

- 5 This invention relates to vehicle load area protectors, and especially but not exclusively to liners for protecting the load area of a car or van.

Background to the Invention

- 10 A vehicle load area, such as the cargo area of a van or boot of a car, can be damaged by items placed into the area. For example, heavy or bulky items, or items having sharp or protruding parts, may scratch or dent the interior of the area or the threshold to the load area. Damp or wet items placed into the load area may also damage the load area floor or any lining on the floor, such as a carpet or mat for example. Other sources of damage to a load area, and threshold thereto, include the entry and exit of persons or animals to and from the vehicle. Animals such as dogs can especially damage the threshold of the vehicle by scratching the surfaces of the threshold with their claws, and may further damage and dirty the interior of the load area once on board the vehicle.

- 25 Attempts have been made to prevent damage to the interior of load areas of vehicles by placing sheets of strong material on the floor of the load area, in order to prevent scratching, denting or other damage to the floor of the load area. Although such sheets can be effective in protecting the floor per se of the load area, they do not prevent spillage of liquids past the edges of the sheets,

not do they prevent damage to the walls of the interior of the load area. In automobiles the rear surface of the rear passenger seats, which generally form the front wall of the load area, is especially vulnerable to damage as it
5 generally comprises soft materials and upholstery, which is prone to ripping and staining.

Furthermore, such sheets do not prevent damage to the threshold of the load area, such as the vehicle load area
10 sill, the rear door locking mechanism and rear bumper of the vehicle.

It would therefore be advantageous to provide a vehicle load area protector which could fit into the load area of
15 a vehicle and protect the interior of the load area from damage, but could also protect the threshold of the load area when the load area is open.

It is therefore an aim of preferred embodiments of the
20 invention to overcome or mitigate at least one problem of the prior art, whether expressly disclosed herein or not.

Summary of the Invention

25 According to a first aspect of the invention there is provided a vehicle load area liner comprising a sheet foldable to form a receptacle having a base and a wall around the base, the receptacle being arrangable in use to be mounted in the load area of a vehicle, and wherein at
30 least a portion of the wall of the receptacle is unfoldable to provide a flap able to mask the threshold of the load area, when the vehicle load area is open, in use.

Thus a liner is provided that can form a receptacle which, due to its construction from a single folded sheet, is watertight between the base and the wall, but which can be manipulated to provide a threshold flap that enables protection of the threshold of the load area of a vehicle whilst allowing items to be inserted into the receptacle.

The sheet preferably comprises a substantially quadrilateral-shaped sheet material in its unfolded state. Preferably the sheet is substantially square or rectangular in shape, unfolded. The corners of the sheet material may be chamfered or fluted to enable efficient folding into the receptacle. Suitably the sheet comprises folds which enable the sheet to be folded such that the base of the receptacle is substantially quadrilateral-shaped, especially square or rectangular. The folds at the corners of the sheet material are preferably such that the corners are fluted to enable efficient folding of the wall of the sheet from the base.

20 Preferably the sheet comprises means to releasably retain the sheet in at least a partially folded configuration, and preferably a fully folded receptacle configuration. Suitably the retention means enable independent retention of the threshold flap on the receptacle, such that the flap can be maintained as part of the wall of the receptacle, and released by a user to form the flap when desired. The retention means may comprise any suitable means such as male and female connection means located on suitable areas of the sheet. The male and female retention means may comprise press studs, hook and loop material such as Velcro (RTM) and the like for example. When the sheet comprises fluted portions at the corners of the

sheet the male and female retention means may be located on adjacent sections either sided of the fold(s) of the fluted area.

- 5 The folds may be oriented such that the wall of the receptacle is taller at one or more portions. Preferably the sheet is square or rectangular and the folds are oriented such that one side wall of the folded receptacle is taller than the other side walls. In this way, for
- 10 automobile load areas, the receptacle can be positioned such that the taller wall abuts the rear surface of the passenger seats to protect the seats from damage, for example.
- 15 The sheet may comprise gripping means to grip the load area floor in use. The gripping means are preferably located on the outside of the base area of the receptacle when folded. The gripping means may comprise an rough key, tacky material or the like, able to grip both a bare load
- 20 area floor or a lining, such as a mat or carpet located on the load area floor.

Preferably the sheet is constructed from plastics. Suitable plastics include polyalkylenes (such as

25 polypropylene and polyethylene, for example) polyurethane, polyester, polyvinylchloride, co-polymers and mixtures thereof for example.

According to a second aspect of the present invention

30 there is provided a method of protecting a vehicle load area comprising the steps of:

- (a) providing a liner of the first aspect of the invention; and in any order

5

- (b) folding the liner to form a receptacle;
- (c) mounting the liner on the floor of the load area

The method may comprise unfolding the threshold flap of the receptacle to mask the threshold of the load area. Suitably the threshold flap is of dimensions such that, when unfolded, it protrudes past the threshold of the vehicle load area.

10 Suitably the method comprises the step of loading goods into the load area, then folding the threshold flap back onto the receptacle to form the complete receptacle round the loaded goods.

15 Brief Description of the Drawings

For a better understanding of the various aspects of the invention and to show how embodiments of the same may be put into effect, the invention will now be described by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 illustrates a part top plan, part perspective view of an embodiment of a vehicle load area liner of the invention in an unfolded orientation;

Figure 2 illustrates the liner of Figure 1 partly folded and mounted in the load area of an automobile, with the threshold flap masking the threshold; and

Figure 3 illustrates the liner of Figure 1 fully folded and mounted in the load area of an automobile to form a receptacle

Description of the Preferred Embodiment

We refer firstly to Figure 1 which illustrates a preferred
5 embodiment of a vehicle load area liner 2 of the invention. The
liner 2 comprises a substantially rectangular sheet 3. The
sheet 3 includes folds 14,14',14'',14''' which define a central
base 4 of the sheet 3 and a surrounding wall 5. The wall 5
comprises four rectangular wall sections 6,8,10,12 on each side
10 of the rectangular base 4, the wall sections being connected
via corner segments 16,16',20,20'. The corner segments are
integral with the wall sections and connected to the wall
sections via a pair of perpendicular fold lines 17-17',19-
19',21-21',23-23', each pair of fold lines defining the corner
15 segment between two adjacent wall sections. The corner segments
further comprise a transverse fold line 18,18',26,26' running
from the intersection of each pair of fold lines 17-17',19-
19',21-21',23-23' to the distal edge of each corner
16,16',20,20'. Thus the transverse fold lines 18,18',26,26'
20 serve to bisect the corner segments into chamfered or fluted
segments having two substantially triangular segments each
(13&15,13'&15',22&24 and 22'&24') extending from the transverse
fold lines 18,18',26,26'.
25 The sheet 3 can thus be folded about all of the folds
(14,14',14'',14''',17,17',19,19',21,21',23,23',18,18',26,26')
to form a receptacle in the form of a rectangular box, as shown
in Figure 2. The receptacle is watertight as the corners of the
receptacle comprise folds rather than connected edges, and thus
30 any liquid within the box cannot leak from the corners.

The wall sections 6,8,10,12 also comprise means to retain the
folded sheet 3 as a receptacle, the retaining means being in
the form of press studs 28 which cooperate with press studs 28
35 present on the segments 15,15',22,22' of the corner segments
16,16',20,20', as shown in Figure 1.

Use of the vehicle load area liner 2 will now be described by reference to Figures 2 & 3. We turn now to Figure 2.

5 The sheet 3 is folded about all of the fold lines to form the receptacle as described above and the folded receptacle secured by retaining it in the folded configuration using the press studs 28. The folded receptacle is then inserted into the load area 32 of an automobile 30, such that it substantially covers
10 the floor 38 of the load area 32. The wall 12 is oriented adjacent to the threshold 34 of the load area 32. When it is desired to insert an object into the receptacle a user releases the press studs 28 which are retaining the wall 12 in position on the receptacle, then unfolds the wall 12 away from the
15 receptacle such that it lies parallel with the floor of the load area 32, forming a threshold flap, masking the threshold 34, as shown in Figure 2. The wall 12 thus serves as a threshold flap which masks the threshold. An object 40, such as a heavy bag of moist sand for example, can then be lifted onto
20 the wall 12 and slid onto the base 4 of the receptacle. As the wall 12 serves to mask the threshold 34, including the lock 39 for the rear door of the vehicle and the rear bumper 36, the object 40 cannot damage the threshold 34 or floor of the load area 32 during insertion into the load area 32.

25 When the object 40 is fully inserted into the receptacle the wall 12 can be folded back onto the receptacle and secured using the press studs 28, as shown in Figure 3. The receptacle is watertight and therefore, if there is leakage from the
30 object during transit in the load area 32, then the floor of the load area 32 will not be affected.

The wall 12, when folded down to form the threshold flap can also serve as a mask to prevent damage from a person or animal
35 climbing into the load area 32. Furthermore the threshold flap can support a user sitting on the threshold 34.

8

The wall 8 opposite to the wall 12 serves to mask the rear surface of the rear seat 33 of the vehicle 30, thus protecting the material of the seat 33 from damage caused by inserting
5 objects into the load area 32.

The liner 2 can just as easily be utilised in a van or lorry load area as an automobile load area.

10 The liner 2 is preferably made from a strong plastics material which can withstand wear and tear from multiple insertions and withdrawals of heavy or sharp objects into the folded receptacle, for example.

15 The liner is also conveniently cleaned by unfolding the sheet 3 and brushing or wiping the sheet to remove dirt and debris. The liner 2 can also be stored conveniently by hanging the folded liner 2 in a garage or other similar structure, or by placing the unfolded sheet flush against a wall for example.

20

The reader's attention is directed to all papers and documents which are filed concurrently with or previous to this specification in connection with this application and which are open to public inspection with this
25 specification, and the contents of all such papers and documents are incorporated herein by reference.

All of the features disclosed in this specification (including any accompanying claims, abstract and
30 drawings), and/or all of the steps of any method or process so disclosed, may be combined in any combination, except combinations where at least some of such features and/or steps are mutually exclusive.

Each feature disclosed in this specification (including any accompanying claims, abstract and drawings), may be replaced by alternative features serving the same, equivalent or similar purpose, unless expressly stated otherwise. Thus, unless expressly stated otherwise, each feature disclosed is one example only of a generic series of equivalent or similar features.

The invention is not restricted to the details of the foregoing embodiment(s). The invention extend to any novel one, or any novel combination, of the features disclosed in this specification (including any accompanying claims, abstract and drawings), or to any novel one, or any novel combination, of the steps of any method or process so disclosed.

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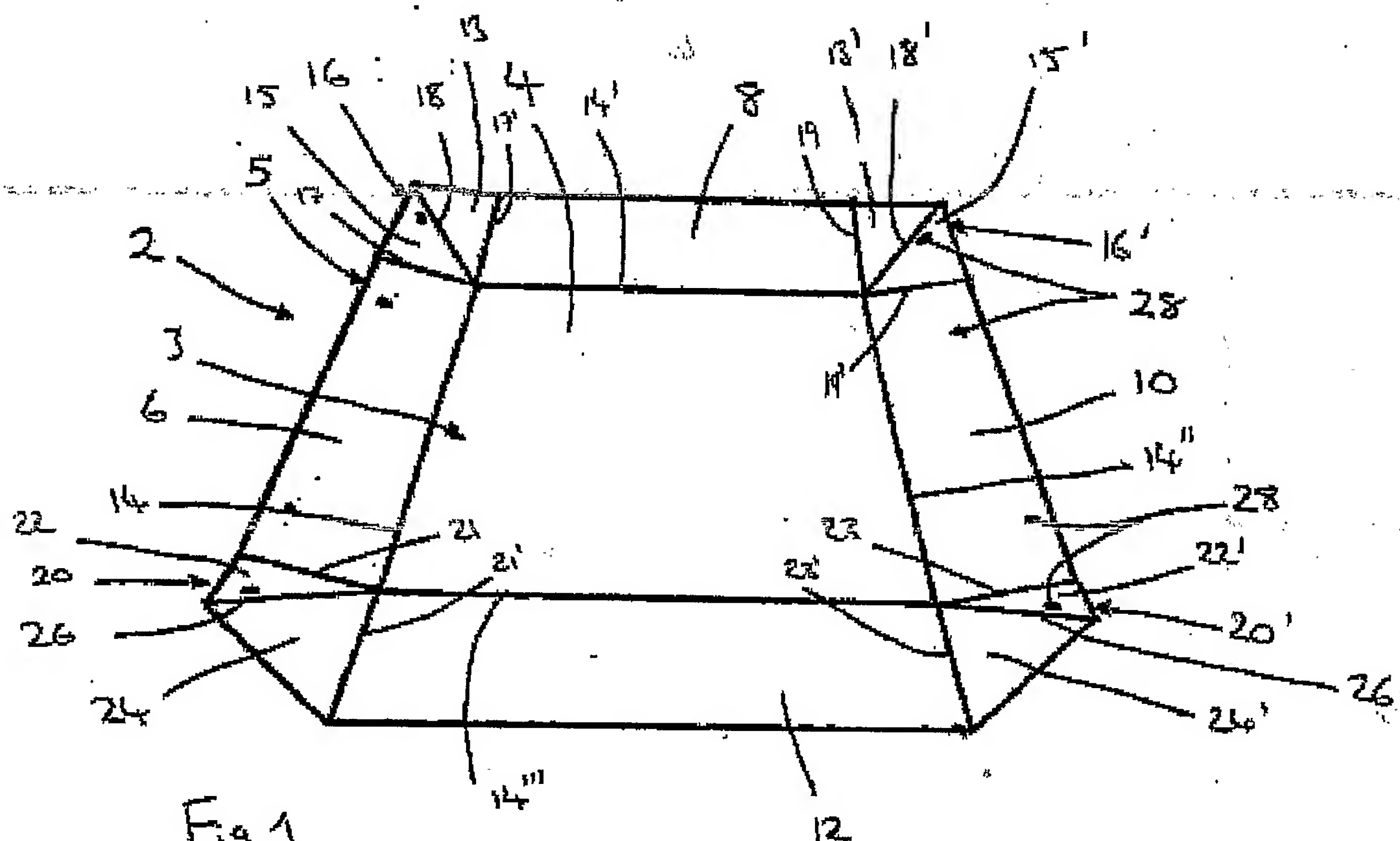


Fig. 1

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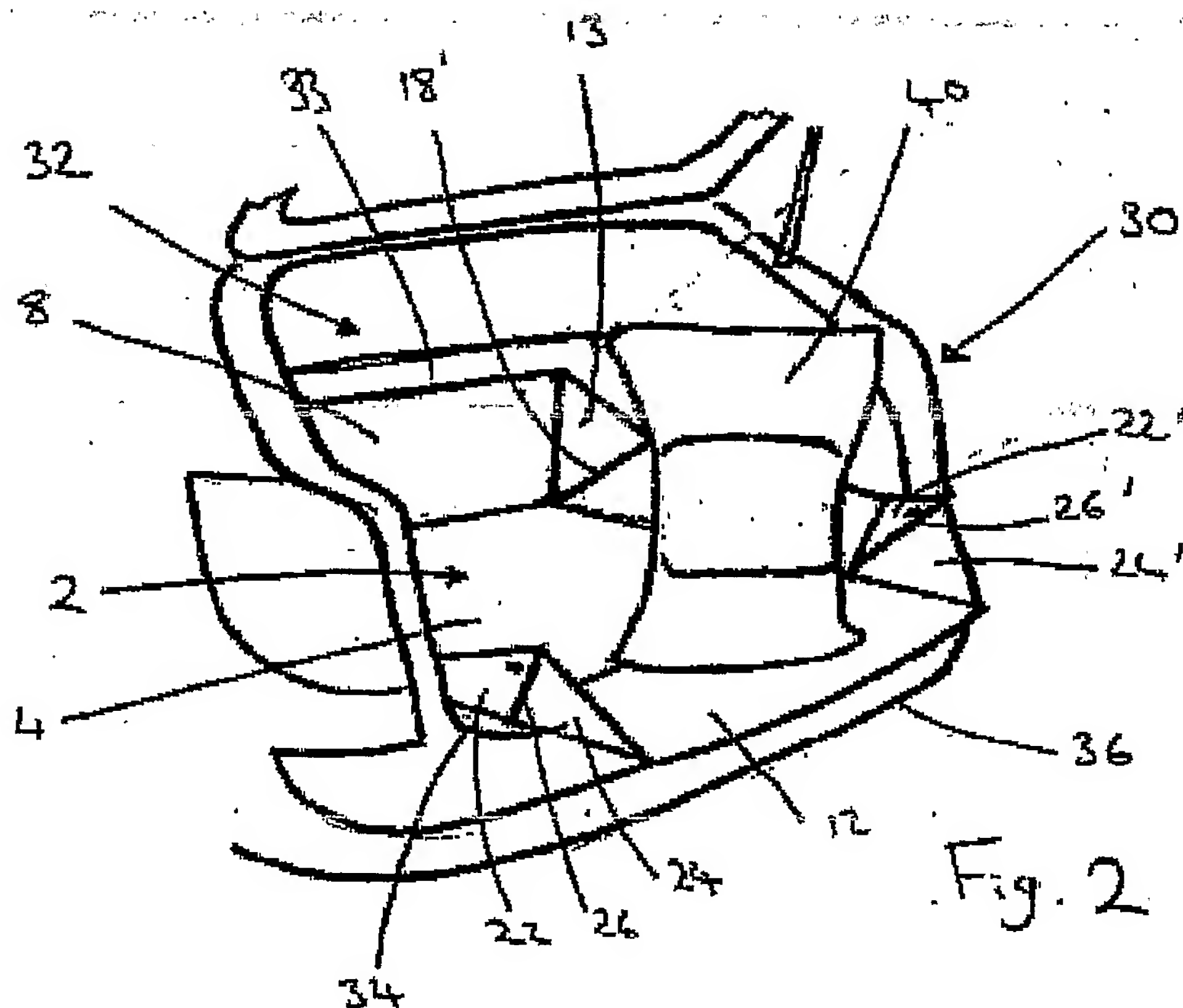


Fig. 2

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